

Project I.D. No 171

NAME: Aoki, Heiji DATE OF BIRTH: 1897 PLACE OF BIRTH: Tochigi-ken
Age: 80 Sex: M Marital Status: _____ Education: 4 yrs.

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1920 Age: 23 M.S. S Port of entry: San Fran.
Occupation/s: 1. Farmer 2. Domestic worker 3. Managed a restaurant
Place of residence: 1. Stockton 2. San Francisco 3. _____
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: Tanforan
Name of relocation center: Topaz, Utah: Tule Lake
Dispensation of property: Sold furnitures. Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. Cook 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Calistoga, Ca.

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1946
Address/es: 1. San Francisco 2. _____
Occupation/s: Housework
Religious affiliation: Christian church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 2/10/77 Place: San Francisco

Mandator Mabel Hall

T: Please tell me your name first.

A: My name is Heiji Aoki.

Q: Where are you from?

A: I am from Tochigi Prefecture.

T: Tell me about your family.

A: My family lived on the outskirts of Utsunomiya City, but that part is in the city now. My mother was the second wife, and I had 2 stepbrothers and one step sister. I was the oldest son and I had 3 real brothers and one sister. None of the boys succeeded the family, so my sister took a husband and succeeded the Aoki family.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in 1897. I am 81 years old now.

Q: What was the occupation of your father?

A: He was a farmer.

Q: Did he have a large farmland?

A: No, it was in Japan, so the land was very small compared to ranches here. I remember him doing real estate business on the side.

Q: Was your father a strict man?

A: He was not too strict. When I was little our family was well-to-do in the village and had a store-house. My father and my grandfather lost money in speculation of ~~rice~~ or something. Since then we became poor, so when I was around 12 years old I went to Tokyo as an apprentice boy as I was the oldest son and there were many younger children in the family.

Q: Was there much difference in ages between you and your stepbrother?

A: No, not much. He is in Tokyo now, and his daughter, who is my niece and her husband came to visit me from Japan about 3 years ago. They stayed with us for 3 weeks, and I showed them around.

Q: Did your stepbrothers give you a hard time when you were little?

A: No, not much. I went to Tokyo when I was around 12 years old.

There were 3 children to the first wife. Then my mother came, and I was born. My grandparnets lived in a retirement house next door, so they raised the first wife's children when my mother came. As the children lived ^{next} door to each other we used to quarrel. When the other children made me cry my mother used to hit me crying.

Q: Why did she do that?

A: In Japan we call it "nasanu-naka" (no blood relation). The first wife's children are not her own by blood. As I was her own child she loved me, but she hit me while she was crying. It was a complicated family. My father's brothers were living with us, too. My sister took a husband and succeeded the family.

Q: Why didn't a son succeed the family?

A: As we left home and went to Tokyo or other big cities when we were young, we didn't want to farm any more. The first wife's son was supposed to succeed the family but he didn't, and I was here, so my sister succeeded the family.

Q: What kind of a person was your mother?

A: She didn't have much education, but she was very sentimental and a perfect mother. She was adopted to a big family which did not have any children. A few years later 2 children were born in that family, so she came to our village.

T: Your mother had a lonely childhood, didn't she.

A: Yes, it was a complicated family. Her husband's brothers were living in the same family, and on top of that there were 3 children by the former wife. She came to such a family. Young people nowadays would not be able to stand that kind of a life.

Q: How were your grandparents?

A: They were in retirement, so they took care of the first wife's children. Grandfather lived till about 80 years old. My uncle died about 2 months ago.

Q: How much education did you have?

A: I only went to a grammar school.

Q: Was it 6 years?

A: In those days it was 4 years. That was the compulsory education.
The year after I graduated it became 6 years.

Q: Do you remeber about your schooldays?

A: I don't have anything to talk about it.

Q: Did you like school?

A: I didn't like it, and I had younger brothers, so I went to Tokyo.

Q: Did you play well when you were a child before you went to Tokyo?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What kind of thing did you play?

A: Around New Year we played tops or flew kites. When it snowed we walked on stilts. Nowadays there are so many cars that we cannot go to our neighbor's except from the back.

Q: Did you go fishing when you were a child?

A: No, I didn't. We didn't have big rivers nearby, only irrigation cannals.

Q: What did you do after school?

A: I did not help the family much as I was little. In summertime we went to the bamboo thicket and picked up bamboo sheath and sold them to make pocket money.

Q: What do they do with them?

A: In those days we hardly used papers. When we buy pastry, miso or when we take lunch we wrapped them in bamboo sheath.

Q: Were they big bamboo?

A: We dried bamboo sheath and used them for wrapping.

Q: How much did they cost?

A: They were very cheap. We sold them to make pocket money.

Q: About how many sheath did you pick?

A: We picked 10 to 15 bundles of them, and sold them to merchants who came to buy them.

Q: What did you do when you went to Tokyo at the age of 12?

A: At first I went to a tabi (Japanese socks) maker's as an apprentice. In those days they were not made in factories but at homes. It was domestic industry, so there was no other worker beside me.

Q: Did your father know those people?

A: My father didn't, but my relation's son who was attending Waseda University was boarding at this tabi maker's home, and heard that they needed a helper.

Q: What kind of work did you do?

A: Just a little bit of sewing or going on errands. Of course I didn't get paid. In those days you had new Kimono made on bon festival (festival of lantern) and New Years and get to go home.

Q: About how many days could you stay home?

A: Overnight. I don't know about people who lived far away. We could go home twice a year.

Q: Was it very hard?

A: I didn't have a hard time.

Q: Were they kind to you?

A: Yes. I stayed in Tokyo since then, and worked at a pastry shop and other places until I reached the draft age.

Q: About how many years did you work at the tailor shop?

A: I didn't work there too long, less than two years.

Q: Where did you go from there?

A: I think I worked at a pastry shop.

Q: What did you do at the pastry shop?

A: I was still young then, so I did odd jobs. When I worked at Kimuraya bakery in Mita near Keio University I was older, so I remember about that time well.

Q: You moved around, didn't you?

A: Yes, I moved around when I was young.

Q: What kind of recollections do you have about the time you were in Tokyo?

A: I remember when Emperor Meiji died I was in Mita which was not far from the Imperial Palace. It was in August and was hot in the daytime, so people went to the Imperial Plaza at night to pray for his recovery. All kinds of organizations and individuals came carrying paper lanterns. We left home to enjoy the evening cool, but when we arrived at the Imperial Plaza we saw people sitting on the ground and praying. I still remeber that scene.

Then there was the Imperial funeral. The day after the funeral General Nogi and his wife committed suicide, and the extra was out reporting their death. Later the blood stained floot mat of Genral Nogi's room was shown to the public.

Q: What kind of hardship did you have while you were working as a shopboy?

A: I was healthy, so I did not feel anything hard.

Q: About what time did you get up in the morning?

A: I usually got up between 6 and 7 in the morning. In those days there was no Saturdays or Sundays. The bakers had the 1st and the 15th of the month off, but the apprentice boys did not have any day off.

Q: Did you eat breakfast after you got up around 6 or 7 O'clock?

A: When I worked at Kimura-Ya Bakery I delivered bread to regular customers' houses before breakfast. I had breakfast after that. Then I walked around the residential area taking orders. In those days sake(rice wine) stores, fish stores and other stores took orders from the customers in residential areas.

Q: About what time did you come back?

A: After coming back from taking orders I ate lunch, and delivered the merchandise in the afternoon.

Q: What did you do at night time?

A: I tended the store at night time. There were people who tended the store and those who baked in the kitchen.

Q: About what time did you go to bed?

A: I think I used to go to bed around 10 O'clock in those days.

Q: What did you call your master?

A: I called him danna. (master)

Q: Have you ever been scolded by your master?

A: I don't remember being scolded.

Q: When did you come to America?

A: I came here in 1920.

Q: What about the great earthquake in Kanto area?

A: I think it was two years after I came here. I think it was in 1922 or 1923. I was working in a summer house of a white family in Santa Barbara then. It was Sunday and it was my day off, so I went to town with some cooks, when extra came out telling us that there was a big earthquake in Tokyo. I remember it well.

Q: Did you work at the bakery until you came to America?

A: No, I was on a ship. The reason I got on board the ship was that one of the customer whom I used to take orders from was the chief engineer of a steamship of Nihon Yusen Company. I became very friendly with them and told them that I wanted to be on board a ship. He got me a job as a baker on board his ship.

Q: How long did you do that?

A: Quite a long time. I was on board the ship during the World War I. I went from France to London twice. As it was during the war we could not use Suez Canal, the ship went around the Cape of Good Hope. As German submarines were around, a destroyer guarded a fleet of about 10 merchant ships. I remember such a time.

Q: Were you on board the ship for a few years?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: What kind of recollections do you have about the life on board the ship?

A: The life on board the ship was a lot of fun. If you are on an European line you leave from Yokohama, stop at Kobe, Nagasaki or Moji, and then go to Shanghai. From there you go through India, Singapore and Marseille in France to London, so it is much fun. You can land at some places, but at some places the ship stops just to load and unload cargo so you cannot land. London is the last stop, and then we come back to Yokohama. While the ship is in the dock in Yokohama we have time. so we take turns in taking days off. I had a lot of fun.

Q: How did you feel when you saw a foreign country for the first time?

A: I was on a Shanghai line at first, so Shanghai was the first foreign place I saw. In those days Chinese coolies had their hair braided in pigtails, so I looked at them with curiosity.

Q: How did you feel when you went to Europe for the first time?

A: When I landed at London some church ladies showed us around the city. I saw the tombs of kings and queens in a cathedral.

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Q: Unlike other Isseis, you have seen the world before you came to America, haven't you?

A: Yes, I have.

Q: Did you moved to other jobs when you were 12 because you wanted to, or how did you change jobs?

A: At first I worked at a tailor shop where they made tabis and shirts. There was a sembei (rice crackers) store next door, the owner of which was a relation of the tailor. As they were busy I helped them.

Q: You didn't change jobs because you wanted to, didn't you?

A: As it was the next door and they were related to each other ~~so~~ I helped them, and finally I went to work there. I liked that job better.

Q: How did you get a job at a bakery?

A: I was 16 or 17 then, so I went to an employment office and got the job.

Q: Did you want to do something else besides working at a tailor shop or a sembei store?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: How often did you go home during that time?

A: I didn't go home much, maybe about once every twice a year.

Q: Your family couldn't say anything to you, couldn't they?

A: No, they couldn't. I had a job, so I just visited them. It was like that in Japan in those days. My family was a farmer, but we were farming in a small scale, so we were poor.

Q: What made you decide to come to America?

A: As I said before, I was on a ship. At that time I was on a ship of Toyo Steamship Co. between Yokohama and San Francisco. I think I was on Korea Maru the last time I came here. In those days there were many picture brides and third class passengers and I got acquainted with them. I made a friend with one of the passengers who asked me to come to America, so I decided to come here. In those days the crew of the ship could not land at San Francisco, as they might run away. The reason why they would run away was that Japanese could not come to America even if they wanted to, so many people came here illegally. In those days there was Japanese exclusion in America.

Q: How did you come here?

A: As I was on the ship for a long time I had seniority among crew, so I could land at San Francisco. I became acquainted with a Japanese farmer in Stockton, and told them that I would go there on my next voyage. When I came to San Francisco the next time I landed there and took a train to Stockton.

Q: Then you didn't go to Angel Island?

A: No, I landed without going to Angel Island. I didn't have a passport. After the war I acquired American citizenship.

Q: When did you come to America for the first time as a ship's crew?

A: It was after I took the physical for the draft, so I think I was 24 or 25 years old.

Q: Was it around 1915?

A: Yes, it was. No, I landed here in 1920.

Q: When did you come to San Francisco for the first time as a crew of the Korea Maru?

A: It was about 2 years before I landed here.

Q: Do you remember^{about} the Isseis and picture brides on board your ship?

A: In those days the third class passengers slept on bunks around the hatch. The passage was about 50 yen from Japan to America and it took 14 to 15 days. There were many picture brides. Other people could not come here then.

Q: Were there many stories about the picture brides on board the ship?

A: I didn't hear much about them.

Q: What kind of thing do you remember about Isseis on board the ship?

A: In those days there were some men who were coming back from Japan after visiting their families, and picture brides. At night time Chinese came around selling rice porridge. We had supper around 5 o'clock, and around 9 o'clock Chinese cooks sold rice porridge for 10¢ a bowl. It was good.

Q: What were you doing on board the ship?

A: I was a baker.

Q: Didn't anything interesting happen on board the ship?

A: At one time while I was on the Seattle line the ship went through a storm, and the mast was blown away. We were scared then. During the voyage there were entertainments in the first, second and third class and had fun.

Q: Did passengers become romantic and become good friends during the voyage?

A: Yes, we bunked in a small room. Nowadays there are ^{labor} unions and they treat you better, but in those days there were no unions so the wages were cheap, but we didn't complain. It is a good feeling to arrive in port. We were young, so we went out as soon as we arrived in port.

Q: What did you do after you went ashore, took a train and arrived in Stockton?

A: They were growing onion there. I think it was around August or September as they had just finished harvesting the crops. We pulled up the onion, dried them, cut off the tops and put them in bags. In those days there were no machines. We even dug up potatoes with hoes.

Q: Did you work at that ranch?

A: Yes, I did. It was 1920 and things were not good for farmers in Stockton. In 1916, 17 and 18 after the World War I there was the post-war boom, and a Japanese bank was opened in Sacramento. Some Japanese started growing rice in a large scale, but things went bad after that and they went bankrupt. The banks were closed, too. I came here in 1920 when things were not too good.

Q: Did you work for some Japanese after you went ashore?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were you around 30 years old then?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Was the work hard for you?

A: No, I didn't think it was hard. It was hard work, and it was hot.

The soil in Stockton made me itch, but as I came here on my own accord, I did not mind the hardship. I wanted to work hard, save money and go back to Japan as soon as possible. I was not the only one who didn't want to stay in America. The exclusion was so bad that there was no hope in staying here. That is why everybody wanted to work hard and go back to Japan as soon as possible.

Q: Was that ranch on an island in delta district?

A: Yes, it was on an island.

Q: What island was it?

A: I forgot what island it was. We went to the island by a boat.

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: I stayed there for just one season. After that I went to San Francisco.

Q: What did you do then?

A: I worked in a family.

Q: As a schoolboy?

A: Yes, something like that. In those days there was a private school near Uoiki store, and Mr. and Mrs. Yamashita taught English to picture brides and young people who came from Japan. Mr. Asano of Nichi-Bei Times went there, too.

Q: Were the teachers Japanese?

A: They were Japanese. I heard that Mr. Yamashita was a Stanford graduate.

Q: What kind of work did you do as a schoolboy?

A: I did housework, and later became a cook. I lived in the house and did housework and cooked, too. There were many Japanese domestic workers in San Francisco. There were couples who worked as domestic workers. In those days there were no other work for Japanese except working in restaurants, barber, dry cleaners or laundry. We could not get licence to open liquor stores or grocery stores. Farmers could not buy land, so some farmers bought land in their children's names, but most children were still young. Most Japanese farmers worked in the white ranch as sharecroppers. The landlord provided the tools, seed and water, and Japanese farmers cultivated the land and got about 60 % of the crop.

Q: When did you get married?

A: I think I got married around 1930.

Q: How long did you work as a schoolboy?

A: I didn't go to school, but I went to Mr. Yamashita's private school. I think I did that for about 5 to 6 years. Then I started a restaurant business.

Q: Since you had experience as a baker and a cook, you knew what to do, didn't you? *

A: Yes, my experience helped. As I had watched the cooks on the ship, it was not hard.

Q: As you were on the ship, that was not the first time you came in contact with the white people, wasn't it?

A: I didn't have contact with the white people on the ship. The first class and second passengers were the white people in those days, and cooks and bakers did not have contact with the passengers. The bellhops took care of cabin or served in the dining room, so they had contact with the white people, but the cooks and bakers did not have contact with the white people.

Q: How was it when you first started working as a schoolboy?

A: At first I didn't know what to do, but ^{as} my wage was little _^ they taught me what to do.

Q: What did you think when you first lived in the house?

A: It is funny. I worked at a white family on Jackson Street as a cook, and Mr. Kojiro Tanaka worked as a houseboy. The master was a German and his wife was a Hawaiian of royal blood. Mr. Tanaka was married, but I did not have any friends so I was lonely. ~~so~~ Mr. Tanaka took me to his church and I started going to the church. At that time Dr. Sturge was there, and Rev. Kuwada was a theological student helping the church. I started going to church and was baptized, but as I worked at different places

I did not have much chance to go to church. Especially after the war I worked at Fairmont Hotel for 14 years. I worked on weekends, and had two days off during the week, so I could not go to church.

Q: Do you remember about Dr. Sturge?

A: I met him, but I never heard him preach. I heard about him from Mr. Tanaka.

Q: How long did you do the domestic work?

A: About 4 to 5 years.

Q: Did you open a restaurant after that?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Where did you open it?

A: On Post Street. In those days there were many employment agencies, Hori, Hideshima, Shiozaki and others. They found daywork and domestic work for Japanese. The reason why there were so many employment agencies was because Japanese could not join the carpenters', plumbers', cooks' or dishwashers' unions before the war. After the war they could join those unions, but they were not interested in joining the unions, so they still did domestic work in San Francisco.

Q: Did you buy the restaurant?

A: Yes, I did. I called it a restaurant, but at first it was like a cigar stand. I bought it from Mr. Ito, and putting in a counter, and hiring a girl I made it into a coffee shop. I sold coffee and icecream as well as tobacco.

Q: Was the business successful?

A: It was unexpectedly successful. At that time I was single. Shortly after that I got married, and worked at different restaurants for about a year. Then I opened a restaurant again. I did not have much money so I bought a small restaurant, and it was not successful.

Q: Was it a little bigger than the cigar stand?

A: It was a little bigger.

Q: How did you find your wife?

A: She was born in Hawaii. Her younger brother was in a school in San Francisco, so she was working in a family to help pay her brother's tuition. There was the Hoku-Bei Hotel on the corner of Buchanan Street, and I knew the mistress there. She told me about this girl and wanted me to marry her, so I went to see her.

Q: Did you like her?

A: I guess so. On her days off she used to go to her friend's who had a dry cleaning shop, so I had dinner with her there. My wife was so unsocialable that we never went to a movie or dinner together until we were married.

Q: Is she a Hawaiian Nisei?

A: Yes, she is.

Q: Could she speak both English and Japanese?

A: Yes, she could.

Q: Did you get married when you were managing the coffee shop?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did you manage the coffee shop after you got married?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Did she still do the daywork?

A: No, as she became pregnant not too long after we got married.

Q: Did you own an apartment?

A: No, I was renting a room.

Q: Did you rent an apartment after you got married?

A: Yes, we did. What we called an apartment in those days was a section of a house which was divided into 3 or 4 sections and remodelled as ~~an~~ apartments. That was before the war. Three newly-weds lived in the house, so it was very lively.

Q: Did you go anywhere on a honeymoon?

A: We didn't go anywhere. We just stayed overnight at a hotel in China town as my wife didn't want to go anywhere.

Q: Do you remeber the Depression?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: Was it not long after you got married?

A: Yes, it wasn't too long after we got married.

Q: Were you affected by it?

A: The business wasn't good, so it was hard.

Q: Which business were you engaged in?

A: Children were born and my wife couldn't work. I didn't want to go out and do the housework, so I put out all the money I had and opened a restaurant. Families that both husbands and wives could work were all right, but when children were born and only the husband could work it was hard to make a living by doing daywork. I didn't like the domestic work too much, so I started my own restaurant. If I could hold out one more year I had a chance, The reason was that when the Sino-Japanese Incident started, Japanese quit going to Chinese restaurants and went to Japanese restaurants, but I quit the business a year before the Sino-Japanese Incident started. The luck was not with me. After the Sino-Japanese Incident started the business became better for Japanese restaurants. A few Chinese youth went around Japan town in wagon throwing rocks at Japanese stores during the Incident.

Q: Did you quit the restaurant business as you couldn't manage it?

A: Yes, I did. Soon after that the war broke out.

Q: What did you do after you quit the restaurant business?

A: I did some domestic work before the war broke out.

Side A Q: Did the relationship between Japanese and Americans become bad before the war?

A: Yes, it was, according to newspapers, but I did not feel it.

Long time ago Americans excluded Japanese by throwing rocks at them, but there was no such thing then.

Q: What were you doing when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I went ~~duck~~ hunting with my boss and his ^{two} friends Saturday night.

Q: Who was the boss?

A: A white man. I did not work for his family, but I got the job from the employment agency. I got in his car with his two friends and went to a Duck Hunting Club for rich people. It was Saturday night, so they drank and played poker. On Sunday morning they got up early and went duck hunting. Around noon a lady who came from outside told them that Japs had attacked Pearl Harbor. We turned on the radio and heard the commotion, so we came back. On the way back they did not listen to the radio or talked about the war as I was with them. At that time I thought Americans are gentlemen.

When we left San Francisco Saturday night there was nothing on the Bay Bridge, but when we came back there were many soldiers guarding the bridge so I was surprised. When I came back to Japan Town I saw fire engines lined up in the street ready to take off. Sailors with rifles were guarding the streets. There was blackout at night. At that time we had 3 daughters; the oldest one was around 8 and the youngest one was about a year and 2 months old. My wife had to feed the baby at night, but she was afraid the light might been seen from outside.

Q: What did you think when the war broke out?

A: I thought Japan had started a terrible thing. As I lived in Japan for many years and knew Japan, I thought it was a mistake to fight against a country which was advanced in machinery and civilization. I was worried. I had seen an American aeroplane factory, so I thought America was no match for Japan. At first Japan was very powerful. It was victorious in Hawaii, Singapore and in South Pacific. When we went to camps we were not too out of spirit because Japan was winning the war then.

Q: Where did you go first?

A: The day after the war broke out Japanese were put under confinement order and could not go out of certain area. We stayed here for about a month after the war broke out. Then we went to Tanforan, and some went to Santa Anita, both race tracks. They sprayed the ^{Stables} ~~horse stalls~~ and built some barracks as temporary quarters. We stayed there about 4 months. Then we went to Topaz in Utah.

Q: What did you do with your belongings?

A: We could take only as much as we could carry in our hands.or on our backs. We could not take anything else.

Q: What did you do with things that you could not take with you?

A: We stored them in the basement of the Buddhist church. We stored some things in a white family my wife used to work for. We did not have good furnitures because we did not have intentions to settle here. I had planned to go back to Japan when I saved \$1,000, but it was hard to save that much. In the meantime I got married and children were born.

Some people criticize about being put in camps, but from my point of view I think it was the best thing that we were put in camps. The main thing was the safety. We were enemy aliens, so we were safe in the camp. Most Niseis were still young. Some Niseis say that it was wrong that America put Niseis who have American citizenship in camps. It might have been wrong from the legal point of view, but in fact, what would have happened if they had put the parents in camps because they were Isseis, and did not put Niseis in camps because they had citizenship? We would have been very worried then. If the parents were not put in camps it would have been too dangerous for them to go to work, and there might not have been any jobs.and there was no Social security in those days, so it was safest to be put in camps, and parents and children could go there together.

When we went to camp there were schools, a hospital, and everything was in sanitary condition. We were never short of food. We were never hungry or cold. Even when it was below zero outside, we had big stoves to keep us warm inside, so we never felt cold. When we left the camp the government gave us spending money. We also received compensation. We listed the damage, and I think I recieved about half of the amount I listed. When I think about the Japanese who who were repatriated from Russia or China with their bare lives, I think America is a wonderful country.

Q: How did you feel when you entered Tanforan Assembly Center?

A: When we first got there we lined up and had meals without paying any money. I felt curious to have meals without paying. Everybody was there together, but some leaders of the community such as priests, monks and teachers were sent to concentration camps. I felt sorry for their families as they were worried about each other. I felt as if I had gone on an outing. We were not in need of anything. We just had to obey their orders. We were never stoned or persecuted.

Q: Was it a stable?

A: Yes, it was. Our barracks used to be a stable. It smelled, but it was sprayed, so I think it was sanitary. I was a temporary quarter.

Q: How long did you stay at Tanforan?

A: I think we stayed there for about two month.

Q: Did you work?

A: No, I didn't. I didn't work anywhere. Only work I did was working in the kitchen. I didn't work at Tanforan.

Q: Didn't any trouble arise when thousands of people get together?

A: Yes, there were some troubles. The biggest trouble was on the loyalty. "Yes" meant loyal to America, and "No" meant loyal to Japan. "No" people had to go to Tule Lake, and "Yes" people could stay there and had chances to go out if they wanted to. When we were divided on "Yes" and "No" even the friends or neighbors didn't talk to each other.

Q: Were there fights?

A: At Tule Lake the boss of the canteen was killed.

Q: Was there any such incident at Topaz?

A: At the time of "yes or no" there were some problems, but besides that there were no outstanding oroblems.

Q: Did you play games at Tanforan Assembly Center?

A: As Tanforan used to be a racetrack there were old wagons. We took springs out of wagons and automobiles. As they were made of steel, we forged them and made cutlery. I still have the hatchet I made. We also made boxes for packing. At night time we ~~w~~^went

out to steal lumber to make shelves.as we did not have anything else to do. In daytime some people played baseball. We were at Tanforan only about 3 months, so we were not settled.

Q: Where did you go from Tanforan?

A: I went to Tule Lake.

Q: Did you go straight to Tule Lake?

A: I went from Topaz to Tule Lake as a "No" group.

Q: Why did you sign "No"?

A: I had an intention of going back to Japan as I did not have much hope in staying here. I knew Japan lost the war, but some people believed that Japan won the war.

Q: How long did you stay at Topaz?

A: I stayed there for about a year to a year and a half. ~~After~~ that I went to Tule Lake.

Q: What did your friends think when you signed "No"?

A: Even some friends stopped talking to me. There was bad feeling as people around me were "Yes group". Some poeple from Tule Lake came to Topaz, and some people from Topaz went to Tule Lake.

Q: Were your children still young when you were in Topaz?

A: Yes, they were. They attended schools in the camp.

Q: Were there problems concerning military service?

A: We had just girls in our family, so it didn't concern us. At

Tule Lake there was Hoshi-Dan (Service Group). The members shaved their heads and wore jackets that had the name Hoshi-dan on them. We had worship service around 5 o'clock in the morning. About one-third of the people belonged to it. At 5 a.m. at the sound of the trumpet we gathered in the field. In the winter it was dark and cold. There were children's group, youth group and adult's group. At 5 a.m. we faced towards Japan and paid respect to the Emperor. Then the members ran around the camp. Many people who did not want to go into military service went there. They renounced their American citizenship. As I was a member of the group, my wife renounced her citizenship. She didn't have to, but she did^{it} as it wouldn't have looked good if she didn't. She had some difficulties after the war, but she reinstated her citizenship.

Q: Did you want to join the Hoshi-Dan?

A: I had only small daughters so I didn't have to worry about them being drafted into service, but I did not feel good doing nothing but just line up at the messhall and getting fed while the people in Japan were fighting desperately in the war. The farmers just raised enough vegetables to eat in the camp, and some people worked in the kitchen or cleaned the latrines. As a Japanese I felt I should be not so idle, so I decided to join the Hoshi-Dan.

Q: Did you want Japan to win the war?

A: Yes, of course, as I am a Japanese and wanted to go back to Japan.

But the situation became worse and Japan ended in unconditional surrender. Then we had to leave the camp. At first they asked only men who wanted to go back to Japan on the first ship. Some men applied and went back. Then the family could go back. We read about Japan's surrender in "Life" magazine and thought that if we had gone back to Japan then we would not even have food to eat, so we had better wait till we find out the condition in Japan. A month before the camp closed I went outside leaving the family in the camp.

Q: Did many people who went back to Japan on the first ship think Japan had won the war?

A: I think there were some. I saw the "Life" magazine, so I knew Japan had lost the war. There was a man who said his daughter who worked at a hospital outside saw some Japanese soldiers. I told him that I couldn't believe it until I see them in uniform with sabers.

Q: Weren't there announcements from the Imperial Headquarters?

A: Some people had shortwave radios, so we had a chance to listen to them.

Q: What did you do at the worship service in the morning? Was there some kind of an order?

A: There wasn't any definite order. We got up by the sound of the trumpet at 5 a.m., and lined up by 5:30 a.m.

Q: Did you wear headbands?

A: We wore headbands with rising sun and jackets marked "Hoshi-Dan". Then we lined up by blocks and bowed our heads toward Japan. It was in military manner and they were very strict.

Q: Did they find out if you were absent?

A: No, it was not that strict but we usually attended the service unless we did not feel well. Young leaders of Hoshi-Dan were taken away to ^{concentration} another camp even if the families were there. At the end we were told that everyone who would attend the meeting wearing the badges would be taken away the following day. That night when I was taking a bath a man from the block came and told me that I should not go to such a terrible place leaving my family behind. After thinking about it I decided to go to the service without wearing the badge. However, my wife told me to go to the service wearing the badge. She would take care of the children if I was taken away. She was born in Hawaii but she was very stubborn. She said, as I was a leader of the group she would be ashamed if I did not wear the badge. But I had my mind already made up not to wear the badge.

Q: What did you do then?

A: I did not wear the badge, but those who wore the badges were taken away. Some of them wanted to go to concentration camp, because they did not have to serve in the military service then.

Q: Your wife was really pro-Japan, wasn't she?

A: She was, as she learned Japanese language in Hawaii.

Q: Then you didn't wear the badge?

A: No, I didn't. Up to then they gradually took the leaders away.

Q: Did the administration keep an eye on you?

A: No, they didn't, as I was old and was not a leader.

Q: Were there some violent men among the leaders?

A: Yes, there were. There were some incidents when I was in Hoshi-dan.

Q: What kind of incidents were there?

A: In Tule Lake there was a warehouse where we stored food. I don't know whether they were soldiers or government officials, but somebody stole some food from the warehouse. It was found out, and it became very strict since then.

Q: ^{Did} ~~were~~ the people of Hoshi-dan ^{Complain} ~~critical~~ about it?

A: Yes, they ^{did} ~~were~~. They said they were going to watch the warehouse.

A man was killed once. He was shot for going near the fence at night. Probably a watchman who came back from the war and had hostility toward Japanese shot him.

Q: How was the strike?

A: When the head of WRA came to Tule Lake he was held hostage by some Japanese for a few hours in the office. They were looking for someone to record the negotiation. At one time a man who was watching the warehouse for thieves was beaten up by soldiers. As I look back, it was wartime so we could not think calmly then. All kinds of things happened then, but we could not help it.

Q: Were there some people in camp who were called "Inu" (dogs)?

A: Yes, there were.

Q: Did they do things that they were called by such a name?

A: Most people knew that there was a communist. As he was a printer, he loaned his machines to the Americans and printed propaganda. As he helped the enemy he was called "Inu" (dog) by Japanese.

Q: Were there many such people?

A: Not, not many. Some people were called "Inu" although they didn't do anything bad. Funny thing is that when someone talk big saying that Japan is going to win the war, everybody agrees. In Japan the Army started the war, and the Navy was against it. Many pro-American politicians were killed by the Army during the 2.26 Incident before the war.

Q: Did you belong to the Heimusha-Kai?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: Were there anybody who joined the military service from Tule Lake?

A: I don't think there was. People from other camps could go out of camp, but we could not go out.

Q: Do you have any other memories of Tule Lake?

A: No, I don't.

Q: How many years did you stay at Tule Lake?

A: I think I was there for about 3 years.

Q: I heard that the food at Tule Lake was not too good. Did you think so?

A: Everything was rationed, but I never felt hungry although it was during the war. Cookies were given to children, but as they were same kind of cookies, the children got tired and threw them away. We dried left over rice for emergency, but we never had to use them. We had plenty of rice. I worked in the kitchen, so sometimes we made manju (bean-jam buns) We used syrup if we didn't have enough sugar. The life in the camp was carefree as they took care of our children, and we did not have any responsibility.

Q: Did you distill sake in the camp?

A: No, I didn't. Some people distilled sake and made much money.

Q: Did they sell sake?

A: People in Tule Lake distilled sake. Some people in Topaz made tofu (bean-curd)

Q: Didn't you have tofu at Tule Lake?

A: We had tofu at Tule Lake, too. They sold tofu at the canteen. They sold sashimi, (raw fish), also. When maguro (tuna) was in everyone went to buy it.

Q: Did you go fishing at Tule Lake?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: What is your hobby?

A: I learned shigin (recitation of Chinese poem) in the camp. I quit it, and now my hobby is bonsai. (potted plant).

Q: Did you leave Tule Lake two months before the camp was closed?

A: I left there one month before it was closed. Then I went to a resort place about 5 miles this side of Calistoga. There were cabins, swimming pools and a bar there. These cabins were the quarters of people who used to work at the shipyard during the war. As the war was over many Japanese went there, while I was in the cabin the boss came to hire me. The year before that he made much money as it was during the war and gasoline was rationed so people could not go far for recreation. Then he torn down fruit

ranches and enlarged it so that his private plane could land.
 He built gamble houses and ^{more} cabins. He invested all the money he made during the war, and became bankrupt.

Q: Could he build gambling houses in California in those days?

A: The boss knew some Italians who were in gambling business, and opened a gambling place upstairs. But he met the opposition from a Navy town, and the business didn't go well after spending much money.

Q: Was it legal to open a gambling business?

A: It was illegal, but there were ways to do that. He built an air strip, built many cabins and remodelled the kitchen. Things went well the year before, but it did not go well that year. He was a good boss. When I left the camp a year before it was closed, I was given a cabin while other Japanese could not find rooms. The boss brought the luggages to the station for me.

T: It may be because you could speak English that you got a good job.

A: I spoke broken English, but I did not have any difficulties.

T: I think that is why people were good to you.

Q: How long did you work there?

A: I worked there one summer,

Q: Were you at the camp when the war ended?

A: Yes, I was. At that time I was farming at Tule Lake. We used to go to work and come back on 4 or 5 trucks. That day when we came back to the gate of the camp, the guards were dancing saying that America won the war and Japan surrendered. We turned green. Up to then we were excited about the Hoshi-Dan, but once we heard that Japan had lost the war, the camp was dead. I thought we were going to become slaves. I was old, but I did not know what would become of our children, so I was sad. All the big cities in Japan were destroyed, and if Japan was occupied I thought we would become slaves. That is why I was sad.

Q: How long did it take before the camp got back to normal?

A: I think it took 2 to 3 years.

Q: Did the leaders of Hoshi-Dan believe that Japan lost the war?

A: Yes, they believed that Japan was defeated. A lawyer helped reinstate the citizenship of the members of the Hoshi-Dan and those who renounced the American citizenship.

Q: Did your wife renounce her citizenship when you became a member of Hoshi-Dan?

A: I didn't have American citizenship, but my wife had citizenship. When my wife came to America she did not have a birth certificate, so she got some kind of certificate to come to America. When she renounced her citizenship she gave that paper to the office in

camp. When she wanted to reinstate her citizenship she did not have any record of her birth, but she finally could reinstate her citizenship. Our daughter helped Mr. _____ office for a while. He was a pro-Japanese and had a Japanese girl work in his office. He helped many Japanese reinstate their citizenship. He helped Tokyo Rose, too. After the war was over there were still 40 to 50 Japanese in the concentration camp. At that time he ordered to have them brought to the court on the second floor of the main post office in San Francisco. He did not charge any fee for his work. I heard that Japanese bought stocks or something and gave them to his son.

Q: What did you do after you lived at Sonoma?

A: We came to San Francisco and rent a room on Geary Street. As there was no rooms to rent I had a hard time, but I finally found one owned by a Filipino. It was on Geary and Laguna. About four families lived in one flat sharing the kitchen which was in the alley. We ate in our room. We had to come to San Francisco as the facility in Calistoga was closed. My wife came here and looked for rooms but nobody rent us rooms when we told them we had 3 children. We were worried, but we finally found one small room on Geary Street. We slept on the floor. I was very glad we found the room. There were ^{many} jobs, but no rooms for rent.

Q: Did you do the domestic work?

A: Yes, I started doing the housework. I worked hard then, and my wife worked, too. I worked in the daytime, and my wife worked at night so that we could watch the children in turn. I forgot how many years after that we bought the house on the 19th Avenue. I think it was about 18 or 19 years ago. In those days the houses were cheaper, so we bought 2 flats for only \$20,200 with \$5,000 down. Of course, there was a second mortgage. In those days they did not rent houses to Japanese. There was no Japanese on the avenue. Father of Mr. Yasukoshi who is in bakery business was the first Japanese to live on the 17th Avenue. That was a year before I moved there. I could not buy a house then, so I bought it using the name of an American.

Q: Did you rent or buy the house?

A: I bought it. The real estate people did not sell houses to Japanese or other nationals. Before the war the Orientals could not buy houses, and they were still not available after the war. Therefore, there were no Japanese or Orientals on the avenue.

Q: Were you the first one to live there?

A: I was the first one on the 19th Avenue, but as I said before, Mr. Yasukoshi moved on the 17th Avenue a year before I did. Now more Chinese live on the avenue than Japanese. Chinese pay good money, and they buy houses as soon as they become vacant. Japanese cannot afford them because they are too expensive.